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RR RUEHCN
DE RUEHHK #1097 0750758
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 160758Z MAR 06
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5527
INFO RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3943
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2413
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8285
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 2773
RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR 6722
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 3712
RUESLE/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 2365
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 9583
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0754
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 3248

UNCLAS HONG KONG 001097

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/CM KBENNETT
USDA FOR DU/US --LAMBERT
USDA ALSO FOR FAS

E.O. 12958: NA

TAGS: [ECON](#) [TBIO](#) [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [HK](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: Hong Kong Detects Two Bone Fragments in a Box of
U.S. Boneless Beef

11. (SBU) The Hong Kong Government issued a press release on Saturday, March 11, 2006 announcing their decision to suspend importation of U.S. beef from plant number 969, Swift Beef Company, Greeley, Colorado, following detection of two bone fragments, approximately 1-2 inches in length, in one strip loin in a carton (box) containing six strip loins out of a total consignment of 89 boxes totaling 4,220 pounds. According to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the two bone fragments appeared to have originated from the transverse processes of the lumbar vertebrae (which, we note, are not considered Specified Risk Materials (SRMs) under the Japanese agreement.) All SRMs -- including tonsils and spinal cord -- had been removed during fabrication. FEHD staff indicated following inspection of the product that they viewed this incident as a quality control problem.

12. (SBU) At present, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department have not discussed how to handle product with commercial defects such as bone fragments in boxes of boneless beef. The industry has standards in place, but these standards were not explicitly referenced in Hong Kong's beef export verification program, which does not specifically address the issue of bone fragments, or set a tolerance for bone fragments in shipments of boneless beef. In this case, the Hong Kong Government has decided to impose a zero tolerance for bone fragments and suspend further shipments from the plant until they receive a detailed investigation report and a statement regarding any remedial measures adopted.

13. (SBU) Hong Kong lifted its ban on U.S. beef imports on December 29, 2005. The first shipments of boneless beef from animals under-30 months of age began arriving in Hong Kong in mid-January. As of Tuesday, March 14, 2006, according to FEHD officials, Hong Kong had received, inspected, and released approximately 51 metric tons of U.S. boneless beef. Almost all of the shipments received to date have been chilled air consignments. The first ocean shipments are just now arriving in Hong Kong. In addition to the air consignment of 89 boxes, FEHD also inspected a 40-

foot container (ocean shipment) of boneless beef on Thursday, March 16, 2006 from the same plant, number 969, which arrived in Hong Kong prior to the March 11, 2006 suspension order. The container was fully inspected and released to the importer.

¶4. (SBU) According to the Hong Kong authorities, they inspect between 5-10% of each shipment arriving in Hong Kong. Prior to the recent air consignment from plant 969, FEHD officials have found no bone fragments or product defects in the product shipped to Hong Kong.

CUNNINGHAM